

20 April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are now into our third school week of 'home-schooling' and Easter has come and gone, as we have 'stayed indoors'. We hope that you are safe and well and that you have been able to spend some quality time together over the Easter break. Currently there is no confirmation as to when our school will re-open. We will, as always, keep you fully informed as to any changes regarding this as and when they happen and we will continue to prioritise supporting your children as they continue their learning at home. Please check the school website regularly for updated information regarding GCSE and A level qualifications.

Although the spring term ended somewhat abruptly, it is important to remember that the students of Workington Academy have much to be proud of with numerous achievements and successes in every year group and I would like to take this opportunity to share some of these successes with you.

Throughout the Spring Term our Year 7 students have continued to build upon the impressive start made to their secondary school career, developing their form group teams, involving themselves in new experiences and focusing on learning and progress across all subjects, which is reflected in their recent Spring term reports. A number of year 7 students have also focused on raising their aspirations, finding out more about Higher Education in a recent 'UniVenture' trip to Newcastle University, at the end of February.

Year 7 students have also continued to show impressive talent in the world of sport, with the year 7 netball team continuing their unbeaten run in the Allerdale and Copeland league and finishing runners up in the Year 7 Tournament. We were also very lucky to have a visit from Ashleigh Neal, an Australian International and Manchester Thunder Superleague Netball player, who delivered a netball coaching session to our netballers in years 7 - 9. We were then able to return the visit and meet Ashleigh and some of her Manchester Thunder teammates for autographs and photos, as we travelled to watch Manchester Thunder vs Loughborough Lightning, as part of our netball rewards trip to Manchester on 7 March.

On 13 March, we held the 'Workington Academy - Just Dance for Sport Relief' event, with students (and some staff) dancing continuously in the Sports Hall between 8am - 4pm. We were very pleased that students from Ashfield Junior School were able to join us for this event and that we raised over £1000, which will be split between Sport Relief and a community defibrillator, to be based at Workington Academy.

We are impressed by the excellent start that our year 7 students have made to their home-schooling so far, showing great resilience, creativity and determination to produce some fantastic pieces of work and complete both physical and academic challenges across a whole range of subjects. Year 7 students are also continuing to lead the way in the Accelerated Reader programme, with students achieving the highest word counts and passing the most quizzes across the academy.

The caring and thoughtful acts that our year 7 students have shown has been overwhelming; making Easter cards, gifts and pictures for loved ones who they could not visit over the holiday period and showing great support for our community, NHS and front-line workers by taking part in our 'Workington Academy Clap for Carers video' and creating rainbows to display in their windows and gardens.

In Years 8 and 9 students are also continuing to work hard during this time and have continued to focus on helping others in our community. Before the end of term, the year 8 and year 9 students wrote letters of support to our local care homes. These were done during form-time and our students provided some wonderful words of comfort to the elderly members of the community. This is something which we will continue to do over the summer term. We have also received positive correspondence from many families, with photographs of year 8 and year 9 students who are all working hard at home. A 'positivity through creativity' focus has resulted in pupils baking, making headbands for the NHS, dance videos and inspiration pieces of art work, all of which represent the students' resilience and positive attitudes. This is being celebrated on our social media sites.

Just before the end of the spring term the year 9 Duke of Edinburgh students planned and completed their sponsored walk around Loweswater. Students had overall responsibility for this event, from planning to execution, which resulted in them gaining their additional ASDAN qualification in Event Management. This will add to their previous ASDAN sport qualification, which they all achieved earlier in the year. Although they were very much looking forward to the final expedition, this has been postponed until the next academic year. The students will then be given the opportunity to complete the Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award, which is a wonderful opportunity to be the best they can be!

All of year 9 have been focusing their attentions on choosing their option subjects for next year. They have had an opportunity to visit different subject areas and spend some time in 'taster sessions' to learn more about specific GCSE subjects. This was very successful and has helped to inform the choices of many of our students. A very successful opening evening was also held at the start of March where our pupils, together with their parents/carers, spoke to class teachers about the GCSE specifications, expectations and course content. We would like to thank everyone who came to this event and hope that it was an enjoyable and informative evening. Option choices have now been submitted and teachers will continue to work on these choices over the coming weeks.

We have been very impressed by the way the Year 10 and 11 students have conducted themselves with regards to their academic studies during the school closure. The amount and quality of work produced has been excellent and it has been really encouraging to read all of the positive feedback from the class teachers. It is really important that students continue with their daily school routine and continue to work independently, display high levels of resilience in order for them to transition into the next phase of their education.

Year 10 students are responding well to the work set on Firefly and other on-line learning platforms such as Seneca, Educake and SharePoint. This will enable students to continue with their GCSE subjects with confidence and will prevent any gaps in their learning. This positive approach will also allow teachers to fully support students on their return to school and allow for a smooth transition into Year 11.

Over the last term a group of 8 students in year 12 have participated in 'The Brilliant Club'. The students have worked alongside a PhD student from Newcastle in the study of artificial intelligence in literature. With the final deadline looming, the students have been working hard to finish their essays which will be assessed at an undergraduate university level. Good luck to all those students!

Some 12 students have also participated in the 'Realising Opportunities' programme, which supports high achieving students in their applications to research-intensive universities. Students attended the national conference in Birmingham, staying overnight at the University of Wolverhampton, with an opportunity to explore the University of Birmingham campus and attend a motivational speech focused on the context of a research-intensive university.

All students who have applied to university have now received their offers. Students have applied for a wide range of courses at a wide range of institutions and we wish each one of them the very best on the course they have selected as their firm choice. Additionally, we have a large number of students who have been highly successful in attaining interviews for degree apprenticeships; the apprenticeship market is increasingly competitive, so we wish all of these students the best of luck with their interviews.

This is an unprecedented time, and I know that this puts strain on family life in many different ways. I hope that all of our families are coping well, as we look forward to a return to normality in the not-too-distant future. Above all I hope that our whole school community stays safe.

Yours sincerely,

Des Bird